

Maytenus senegalensis

Celastraceae

Indigenous

COMMON NAMES: **Digo:** Mtsokolangongo; **Giriama:** Mkokoa, Mdziyadziya; **Kamba:** Kithethuki, Kivundangiti; **Luhya (Bukusu):** Kumwayakhafu; **Luo:** Mathari, Nyamage, Nyandema; **Maasai:** Olaimurunyai; **Malakote:** Baagasa; **Pokot:** Akwichanian; **Sabaot:** Chemetio; **Samburu:** Laimurunyai; **Sanya:** Boja, Adhe; **Tharaka:** Mugugutu; **Turkana:** Ekaburu.

DESCRIPTION: Usually a shrub, but can be a tree to 8 m high, the trunk straight with drooping branches and many sucker shoots, either with or without spines. Deciduous. **BARK:** Trunk grey, rough and thick, vertical grooves; spines to 1–5 cm, on smooth red or grey-green branches that have no hairs or dots. **LEAVES:** Alternate or in clusters, smooth, often fleshy, variable in shape, oval, the tip often wider than the base, 3–12 cm long, the edge finely round toothed, the short stalk and midrib often pink. **FLOWERS:** White–cream–green in dense stalked clusters about 4 cm across, sweet scented, often covering the tree. **FRUIT:** A 2- or 3-part capsule, green then red, round, to 6 mm, 1–2 shiny red-brown seeds, more than half covered by a soft white aril.

ECOLOGY: A tropical African shrub or tree from North Africa, Somalia to Senegal, south to South Africa, in Madagascar and east to Bangladesh, with a wide altitude range from sea level up to 2,400 m. In Kenya, found in most of the country except the dry north-eastern parts in wooded grassland and in riverine vegetation in the drier parts. At the coast it is found near ponds, in clay soils or on coral rag. Tolerates salinity, 0–2,100 m. Agroclimatic Zones I–III. Flowers in February and fruits in April at the coast. Flowers in May in Nairobi and nearby districts, March–May and November–December in Nyanza and Western Kenya. In fruit in July–September in Bungoma and November–December in Nyanza.

USES: Firewood, charcoal, poles, tool handles, walking sticks, combs, medicine (root, leaves, bark), fodder (leaves), bee forage, live fence, dry fencing (spiny branches used around cattle bomas), ornamental. Flowers are put in coconut oil to perfume it for use as body oil.

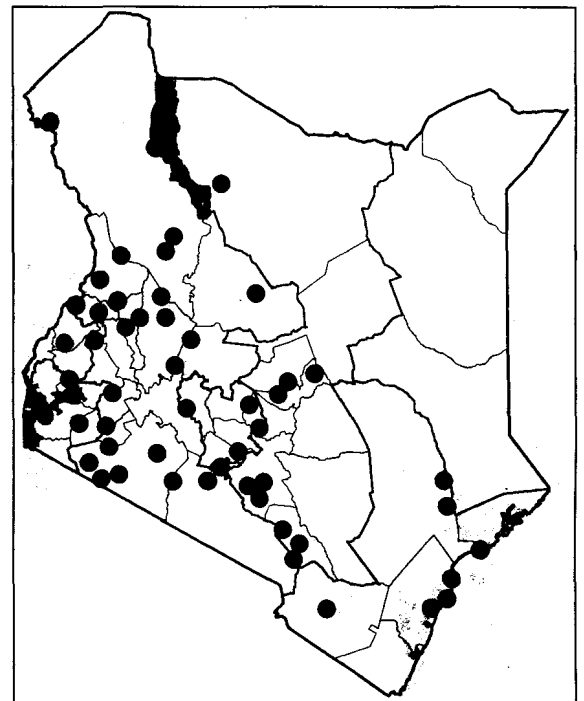
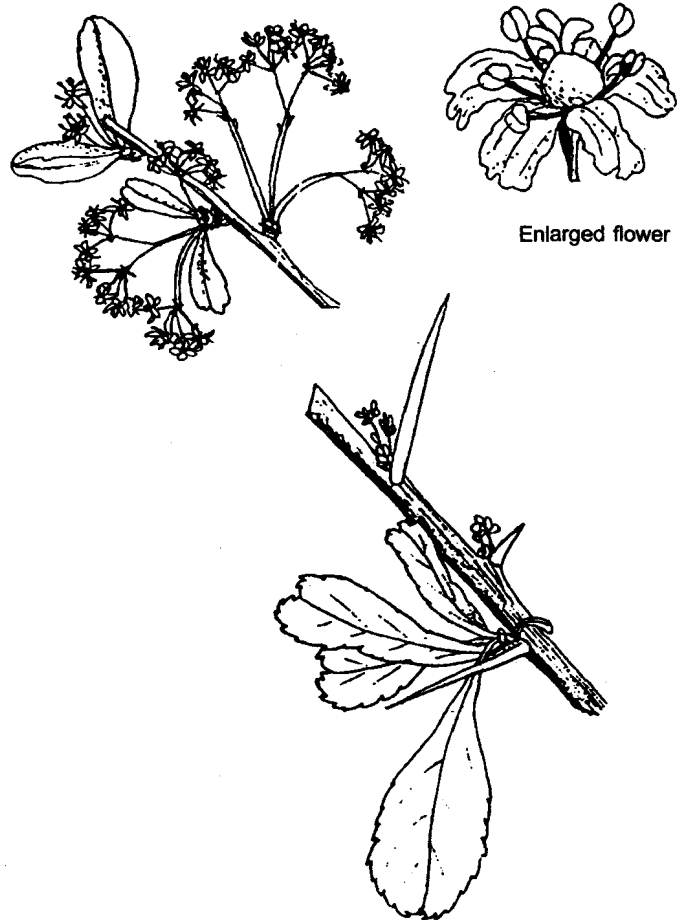
PROPAGATION: Seedlings.

SEED: Prolific seeder. Seeds usually dispersed by birds.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Mature and dry seed can be stored for some time if kept cool in sealed containers.

MANAGEMENT: Lopping, trimming tops and sides if the aim is to produce a good live fence.



***Maytenus senegalensis* (cont)**

REMARKS: This is a common shrub that has many uses.

When in flower it becomes a beautiful bush with the very many small cream-green sweetly scented flowers that attract pollinators, especially bees. It can be a good ornamental. The wood is yellow-white, hard and durable. *Maytenus* is a relatively large genus with close to 200 species, mainly occurring in the tropics of both the New and Old Worlds.

FURTHER READING: Backes and Ahenda, 1998; Beentje, 1994; Bein et al., 1996; Bekele-Tesemma et al., 1993; Blundell, 1987; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Kokwaro, 1993; Noad and Birnie, 1989; Palgrave and Palgrave, 2002; Sommerlatte and Sommerlatte, 1990; von Maydell, 1990.

